RAWHIDE KID

21
APRIL

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10¢

BETTER BACK AWAY, GENTS! YORE OUT-NUMBERED! IT'S ONLY THE THREE OF YUH AGAINST THE RAWHIDE KID!

IN THESE PAGES YOU WILL MEET "THE GUNMEN OF SUNDOWN CITY!"

KIRBY + AYERS

The Lone Ranger, a Jack Wrather Production, seen every week over TV and sponsored by General Mills Cereals.

DRAW THE LONE RANGER!

Contest Prize:
$495.00 Scholarship in Commercial Art

Draw the Lone Ranger any size you want except a size that would look like a tracing. Use pencil. Everyone who enters this contest gets a professional estimate of his talent without charge. Winner receives a complete course in advertising art, magazine illustrating, cartooning, or landscape or portrait painting.

Try for this free art course from the world's largest home study art school. Students of this school are taught, individually, by professional artists. Illustrated art textbooks cover both basic and advanced training. Many former students now earn upwards from $150 a week as commercial artists. Some earn $25,000 a year.

Purpose of contest is to uncover talent that could be developed for art careers. Show what you can do! Send your drawing of the Lone Ranger. Entries for March 1961 contest due by March 31. None returned. Amateurs only. Our students not eligible. Winner notified. Start your entry today.

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THE RAWHIDE KID

"THE GUNMEN OF SUNDOWN CITY!"

Stan Lee

CHAPTER 1

REACH FOR THE CEILING, KID! YORE MY PRISONER!

THE MARSHAL!

DUCK FOR COVER, BOYS! THE KID'LL NEVER LET HIMSELF BE TAKEN ALIVE!

KIRBY & AYERS

I'VE GOT TO CHANCE A **DRAW!** MEBBE I CAN SHOOT THE IRON OUTTA HIS HAND!

NO, YUH **DON'T**, KID! I WAS **EXPECTIN'** A MOVE LIKE THAT!

POW! POW!

DID YUH **SEE** THE KID'S DRAW?

FASTEST THING I EVER SAW!

HE ALMOST BEAT THE MARSHAL TO IT--EVEN THOUGH THE MARSHAL ALREADY **HAD** HIS IRON OUT!

ALL RIGHT, KID, MOUNT UP! I'M TAKIN' YUH BACK TO THE COUNTY SEAT!

I'M **WARNIN'** YUH MARSHAL! YUH'LL NEVER GET ME TO JAIL **ALIVE!**

I WOULDN'T WANNA BE IN MARSHAL BEN CARSON'S SHOES RIGHT NOW!

NO, IT'S A LONG RIDE TO THE COUNTY SEAT!

I'M BETTIN' THE MARSHAL NEVER MAKES IT!

I DON'T CARE **HOW** I GET YUH THERE, SON! I GOT A JOB TO DO, AND I AIM TO **DO** IT!

BEN CARSON IS A GOOD LAWMAN, AND A DECENT HOMBRE ...BUT I CAN'T LET HIM TAKE ME PRISONER! I'VE GOT TO THINK OF SOMETHIN'-- **ANYTHING!**

FINALLY, TEN MILES OUT OF SUNDOWN CITY...

IT'S A LONG CHANCE --BUT I'VE GOTTA TAKE IT!

UP, NIGHTWIND! **UP, BOY!**

LOOK OUT, KID! **WHOA!!**

ONLY A SCANT TWO FEET FROM MARSHAL CARSON'S HORSE, NIGHTWIND SUDDENLY REARS UP-- SHARPLY! THE UNEXPECTED MOVE CAUSES THE MARSHAL'S MOUNT TO LOSE HIS BALANCE, AND STUMBLE...

AND BEFORE BEN CARSON'S STALLION CAN REGAIN HIS FOOTING, THE RAWHIDE KID IS GALLOPING MADLY TOWARDS THE HILLS, ON THE FASTEST STEED NORTH OF THE RIO GRANDE!

THIS IS **IT,** NIGHTWIND! RIDE, BOY--RIDE AS YOU'VE NEVER RIDDEN BEFORE!

MUH ANKLE--I BROKE IT! OF ALL THE CONFOUNDED MISERABLE LUCK... I CAN'T EVEN GIT BACK UP ON MUH HOSS! RUN, BOY--RUN BACK TO TOWN FOR HELP! HEAR ME, FELLA? GO!

BUT EVEN AS THE RAWHIDE KID MAKES GOOD HIS ESCAPE, THREE PAIR OF EYES WATCH THE HELPLESS LAWMAN WITH EVIL GLEE! THREE PAIR OF THE MOST MERCILESS, SINISTER EYES IN THE TERRITORY! THE EYES OF **GRIZZLY YOUNGER**, AND HIS TWO DESPERADO PARTNERS!

LOOK, BOYS! IT'S THE MARSHAL--HE'S **HURT!**

NOW'S OUR CHANCE, GRIZZLY! WE CAN MAKE HIM OUR **PRISONER**... AND SUNDOWN CITY WILL BE **OURS!**

RIGHT, GRIZZLY! WITH BEN CARSON OUT OF THE WAY, NO ONE ELSE CAN STOP US FROM TAKIN' OVER THE WHOLE BLAMED TOWN!

IT'S GRIZZLY YOUNGER--AND HIS TWO PARDS, APE AND PATCH! THEY NEVER **DARED** COME INTO SUNDOWN CITY WHILE **I** WAS THERE--BUT NOW--NOW **THEY'LL** HAVE THE UPPER HAND!

HOWDY, MARSHAL! RECKON WE GOT A LITTLE UNFINISHED BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF!

MUH GUN--IF I COULD ONLY REACH MUH GUN!

RELAX, LAWMAN! **WE'RE** HOLDIN' ALL THE WINNIN' CARDS!

ZINNG

MEANWHILE...

THAT'S STRANGE! THE MARSHAL ISN'T CHASIN' ME! BUT BEN CARSON WASN'T THE TYPE OF HOMBRE TO LET A PRISONER GIT AWAY WITHOUT A FIGHT!

WELL, I MIGHT AS WELL BED DOWN FOR THE NIGHT! RECKON WE CAN **BOTH** USE SOME SHUT-EYE, EH, NIGHTWIND?

AND, THE NEXT MORNING...

QUIET, BOY! THERE'S SOMEONE IN THOSE TREES YONDER!

A COUPLE OF DRIFTERS...SEEM MIGHTY ANXIOUS TO GIT TO SUNDOWN CITY!

I JUST HEERD ALL ABOUT IT, CAL! BEN CARSON AIN'T MARSHAL OF SUNDOWN CITY NO MORE! THE TOWN'S WIDE OPEN! GRIZZLY YOUNGER AND HIS BOYS TOOK OVER!

THAT MEANS IT'LL BECOME A HAVEN FOR EVERY OWLHOOT IN THE COUNTY! LET'S MAKE TRACKS AND GIT IN ON SOME OF THE PLUNDER!

HEAR **THAT**, NIGHTWIND? SOMETHIN' MUSTA HAPPENED TO THE MARSHAL! THERE'S NO LAW IN SUNDOWN CITY NOW! THAT MEANS IT'LL BE **SAFE** FOR US TO GO BACK!

THAT MEANS NO MORE RUNNIN' FOR US, BOY! NO MORE HIDIN'! WE'LL BE ABLE TO HOLE UP FOR A SPELL!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE...

THE GHOSTLY PRINTS

THE deep clang of a hammer sounded on the crisp, cold air as the clock in the kitchen of the house behind the smithy chimed seven.

Already, Rufus Barton, blacksmith of the sleepy little Western cattle-ranching town of Deep Gulch, was at work. The smithy stood about two hundred feet back from a crossroads. One of the roads went to Kaneburg, the other to Deep Gulch. Their opposite ends connected with main dirt highways leading to the county and state capitals.

In front of the smithy there waited, even at that hour, four horses requiring shoeing. Two horses had already been attended to by the big, beefy smith. He held up the shoe he'd been hammering, looked at it critically as it glowed a bright red, and then quenched it in a barrel of water. With a hiss it went black. The blacksmith then hammered the shoe onto the forehoof of the waiting horse.

A fourth horse was pulled in and made ready. Meanwhile Rufus fired up on his furnace with a mixed fuel of buffalo chips, dried wood and coals. The furnace flamed up brightly as Rufus took his calipers and measured the fourth horse's left rear hoof.

The spacious smithy was far from empty. Located on the fairly-well-traveled crossroads, it was a haven for the amiable gossips of Deep Gulch, those hale and hearty older ranch-owners whose affluence allowed them a bigger bunkhouse crew than usual, and a foreman who could handle the ranch's affairs while the ranch boss attended to a pleasant chore.

Around the barrel of water sat four men, boon companions of Rufus, their chairs tilted back against posts holding up the smithy roof.

Joe Bigart critically watched the smith fire-up again on the furnace and place a horseshoe in the fireplace itself, secure in the grip of tongs. He had, only a moment before, made a judicious comment on the coming elections, a few months off. Before that, trade had been discussed, cattle breeds compared and the new freightage charge for shipping on the railroad roundly denounced. The next thing Joe Bigart said had nothing to do with cattle or railroads or politics or trade. He said. "Anybody hereabouts startin' to keep sheep?"

Len Wadsworth's calm, placid face suddenly purpled.

"Sheep?" he asked. "Did you say sheep?" And he started breathing heavily.

"I said sheep," Joe Bigart rejoined.

"If you said sheep, somebody's been seein' things," Wadsworth said, his angry purple color cooling down a bit into a mild lavender. "This is cattle country, and the galoot who brings a sheep into it . . ."

Rancher Walt Kubik nodded.

"Last sheep 'round here were shipped out in '73," he said, with satisfaction. "Why, they're death on cattle-grazin' grounds, kill off all the tall grass." He nodded sagely to himself. "I hate sheep," he said. "I hate 'em so bad I won't even eat lamb chops . . . and I love lamb chops."

Thus far the fourth member of the smithy's conversation club had said nothing. Brad Harvey's color was usually on the pale side. But now it was sheet-white. His big adam's apple went up once or twice, and he gulped and kept looking at Joe Bigart.

"You saw them, too," he said, in a quavering voice. "B'gosh, I'd hoped it was just my imagination, but when somebody else sees ghost marks . . ."

"Ghost marks?" exclaimed Len Wadsworth. "Say, what is all this about?" And he thrust a belligerent chin at Joe Bigart.

"I was crossin' the shortcut at Ranger Rise when I saw tracks in the frosted ground," Joe said, shrugging. "I never thought much of 'em except that sheep tracks are rare, and . . ." He paused, his eyes lighting with remembrance. "Yep, there was something odd about 'em. They were kinda big!"

Brad Harvey's voice cut in like a dull-edged knife.

"That's what I thought," he said. "Too big. They're ghost marks. No live sheep ever made them." He shuddered.

Walt Kubik had said little, and had been watching Rufus Barton adjust the horseshoe he'd now hammered into the proper shape. Now he turned and looked Brad Harvey square in the eye.

"Brad, you've got too much imagination," he said. "You're always talkin' about ghosts."

"Well, I believe in ghosts," Harvey said, with conviction. "I got a right to believe in 'em, don't I?"

Kubik's eyes twinkled. "Sure,"

CONTINUED BEFORE LAST STORY

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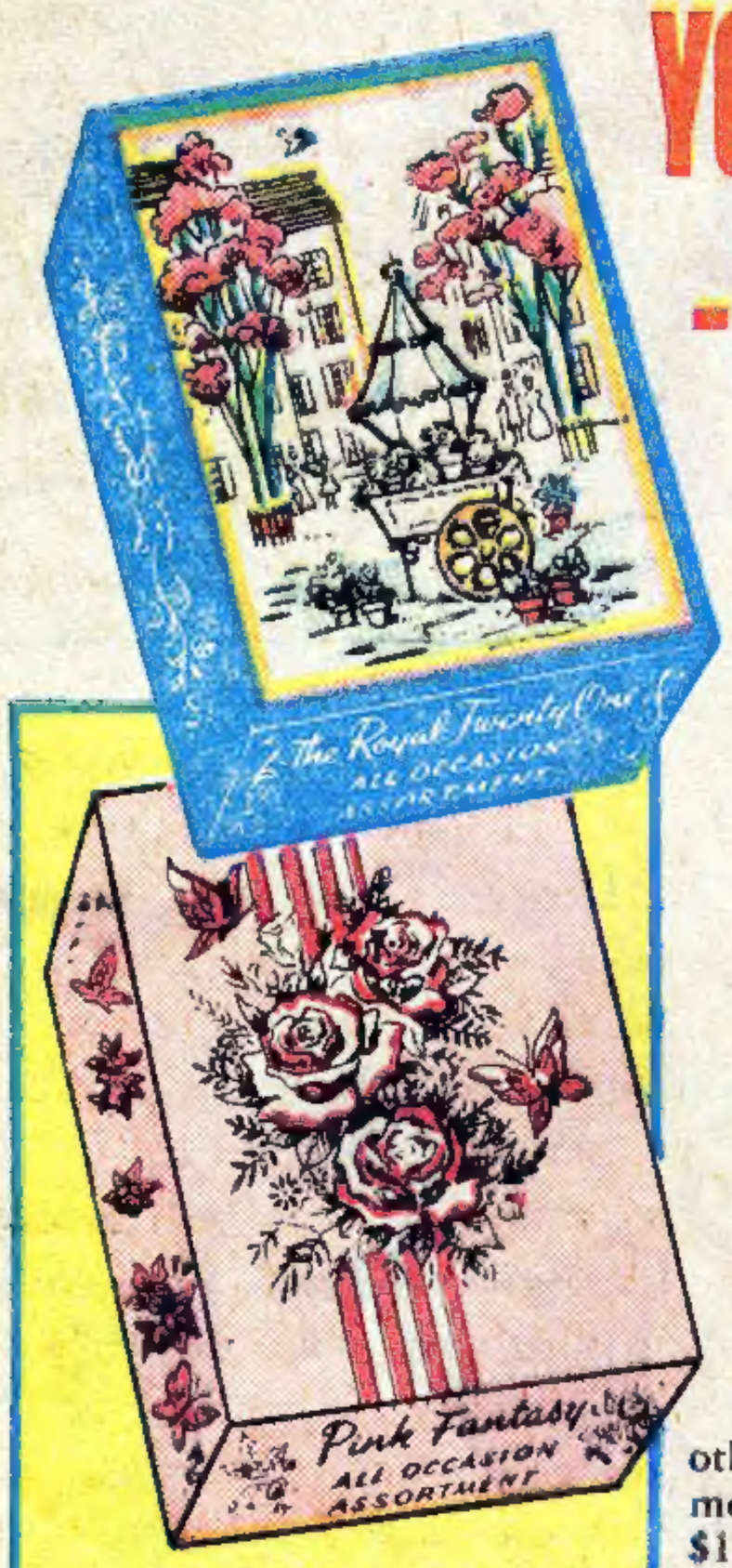
YOU CAN MAKE AT LEAST $50.00 -MORE LIKELY $100.00 to $200.00 IN YOUR SPARE TIME!



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BUT, UPON REACHING TOWN...

HUH?!!

CRACK!

GIT OFFA THAT HOSS, MISTER!

WHAT YOU DOIN' HERE IN SUNDOWN CITY?

A WELCOMING COMMITTEE, EH?

WELL, **SOME** HOMBRES DON'T LIKE TO BE SHOT AT!

UGH! **GIT** 'IM, APE!

OW! WHAT DO YUH THINK I'M **TRYIN'** TO DO?

ALL RIGHT, BREAK IT UP, OR I SHOOT!

GRIZZLY YOUNGER!

PART 2 "THE KID FIGHTS FOR HIS LIFE!"

Stan Lee

LOOK! THE KID RETURNED!

THE ONLY HOMBRE WHO MIGHT HAVE HELPED US, NOW THAT THE MARSHAL'S GONE!

BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THE **KID'S** DONE FOR, TOO!

THE KID! HE'S THE ONE WHO FINISHED OFF OUR PAL, BLACKJACK BORDEN A WHILE BACK!*

YUH FOOLS! DON'T YUH KNOW WHO THIS IS? IT'S THE RAWHIDE KID!

(*SEE RAWHIDE KID #20 FEB. FOR THE GRIPPING SAGA: "SHOOTOUT WITH BLACKJACK BORDEN!")

Marv Ayers

V-102

HOLD ON, APE! I'LL GIVE THE ORDERS HERE!

WE'LL FINISH HIM OFF, SURE! FIRST, LET'S HAVE A LITTLE **FUN** WITH 'IM!

HE SEEMS TO HAVE LOST HIS GUNS SOMEWHERE-- SO LET'S FIND OUT HOW TOUGH HE IS **WITHOUT** 'EM! YOU TAKE HIM **FIRST**, PATCH!

IT'LL BE A **PLEASURE**, BOSS!

THIS IS THE TOUGHEST SPOT I'VE EVER BEEN IN! AT LEAST A **LAWMAN** HAS TO FOLLOW SOME RULES --BUT **THESE JASPERS** WILL STOP AT NOTHING!

BUT IF I'M GONNA GO DOWN, I'LL SURE MAKE 'EM KNOW THEY'VE BEEN IN A FIGHT!

OWWW--

LET'S SEE HOW YUH CAN **TAKE** IT NOW, HOMBRE!

HOW CAN ANYONE **SO SMALL** AND THIN **HIT** LIKE THAT?

GO ON AND HELP PATCH, APE! I DON'T WANNA TAKE NO CHANCES WITH THAT KID!

THIS IS WHAT I BEEN **WAITIN'** FOR!

UGH!

YOU MAY CALL YOURSELF AN **OWLHOOT**--BUT YORE THE MOST DANGEROUS **ENEMY** ANY OF US EVER HAD!

I RECKON **ANYTHING** IS FAIR WHEN YUH FIGHT WITH A TWO-LEGGED ANIMAL!

MUH EYES!

THIS IS THE FINISH FOR YOU, KID!

HOLD 'IM FOR ME, PATCH-- I'LL GIT 'IM!

WHAT DO YUH EXPECT **ME** TO BE DOIN' ALL THE TIME, HOMBRE? JUST **STANDIN'** THERE?

I NEED--JUST A MINUTE --TO CATCH MUH BREATH--

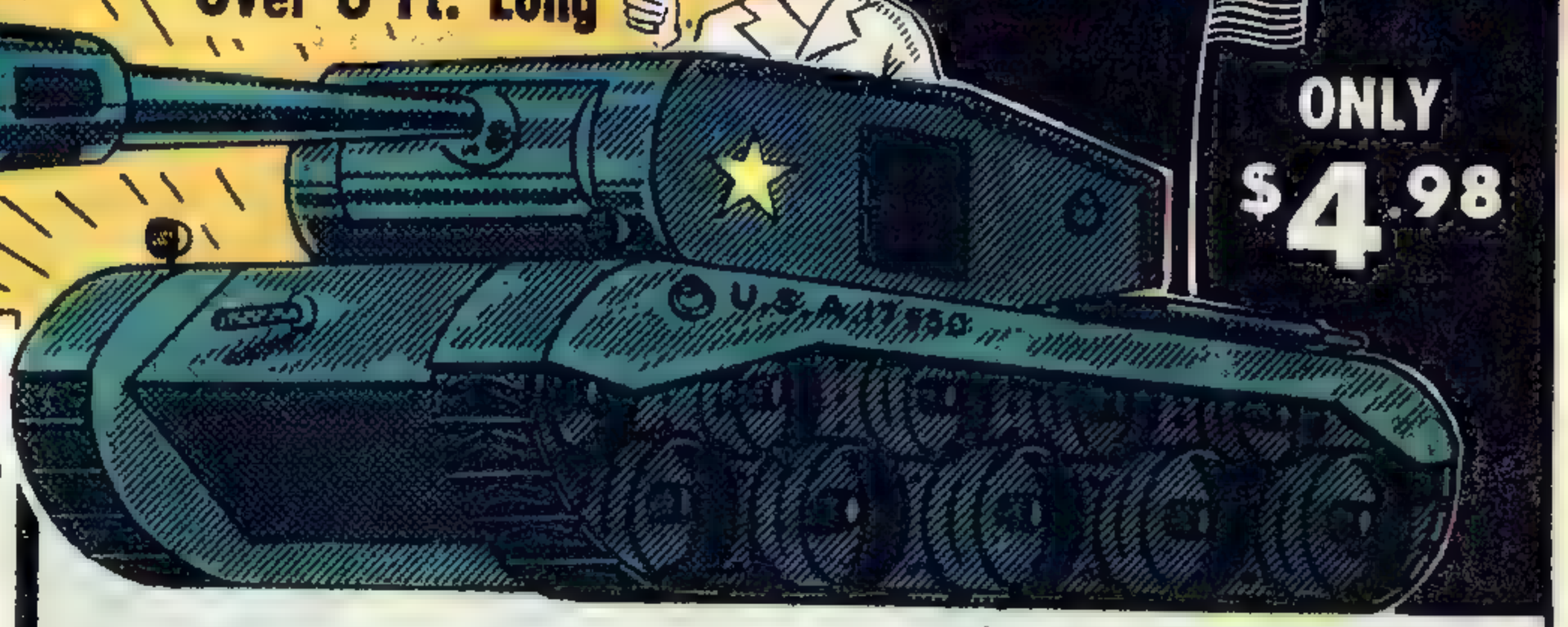
LET'S GO, APE-- WE'LL **BOTH** RUSH 'IM AT ONCE!

THIS OUGHTTA DO IT-- HE'S DOG-TIRED ALREADY --THEM LITTLE FELLAS CAN'T NEVER FIGHT FOR TOO LONG!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE...

A REAL MOBILE TANK

Over 6 Ft. Long



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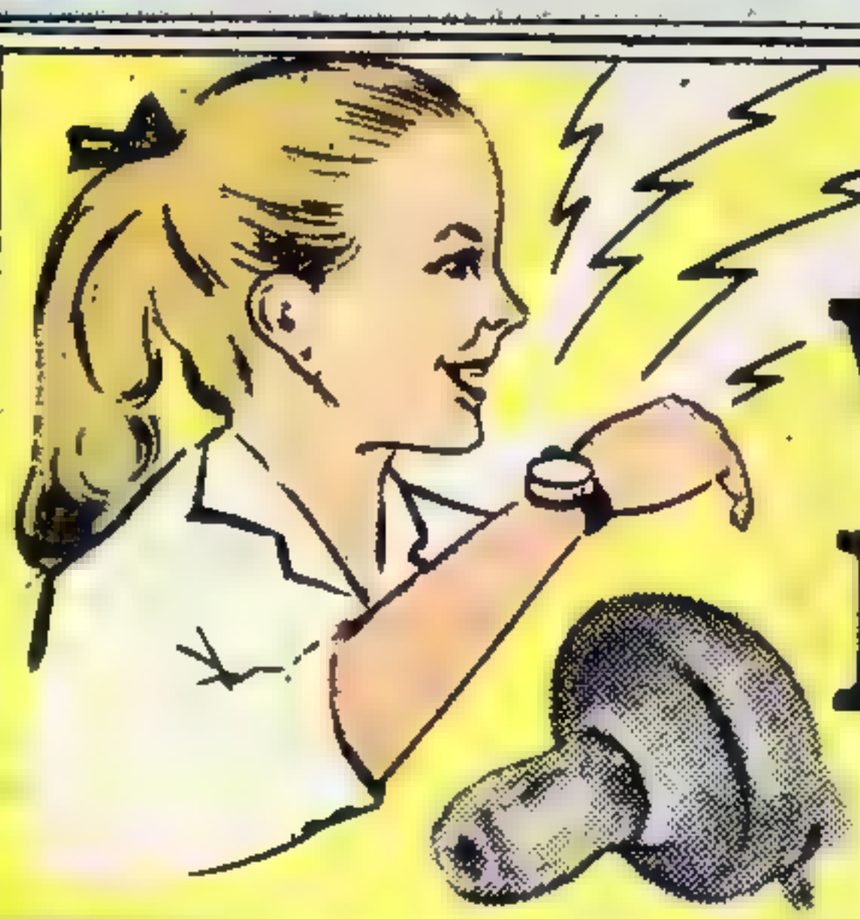

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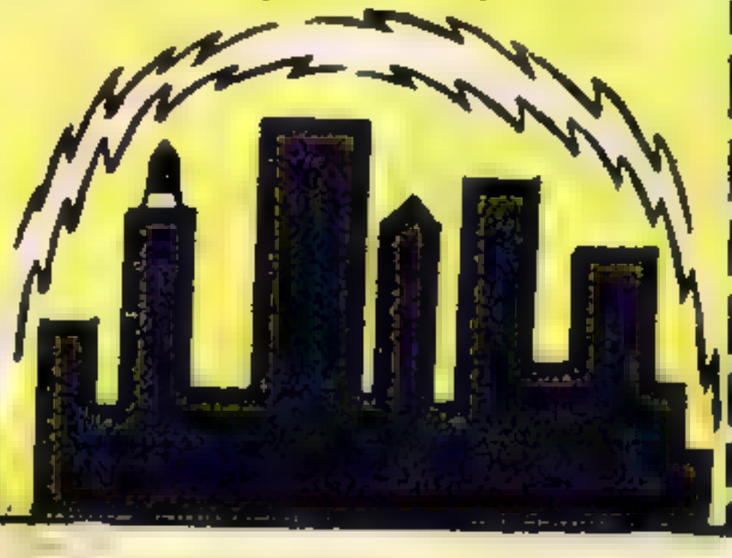

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Name.....

Address.....

I GOT ONE MORE GOOD PUNCH IN ME--AND THIS IS IT!

POW!

CRACK!

RECKON THAT... WINDS IT UP...

NO, KID--YUH AIN'T THRU **YET!** YUH STILL GOT **ME** TO SETTLE WITH!

GO AHEAD--SHOOT! MEBBE IT'S THE BEST THING! BUT YUH WON'T CATCH ME **CRAWLIN'** GRIZZLY--NO MATTER **WHAT** YUH DO!

NO, KID, I AIN'T A'SHOOTIN'--THAT WOULD BE TOO **EASY!** I GOT **OTHER** PLANS FOR YUH!

I'M ORDERIN' YUH TO **JOIN UP** WITH ME! ANY HOMBRE THAT CAN FIGHT LIKE YOU, BELONGS IN MY GANG! WITH **YOU** RIDIN' WITH ME, I RECKON I CAN BE THE BIGGEST MAN IN THE WEST!

AND IF I SAY NO?

IT'LL BE THE LAST WORD YUH EVER SAY!

CLICK!!

PART 3

"the RAWHIDE KID" OUTLAW!"

Stan Lee

WHY **SHOULDN'T** I JOIN? I DON'T OWE THE LAW NOTHIN'--IT'S HOUNDED ME AND MADE ME A FUGITIVE FOR YEARS! **SURE** I'LL JOIN UP WITH YUH! THEN MEBBE I CAN STOP RUNNIN'!

DIDJA HEAR **THAT?**

THE FASTEST GUN IN THE WEST JOININ' UP WITH GRIZZLY YOUNGER'S GANG!

NO PLACE IN THE TERRITORY WILL BE SAFE FOR AN HONEST MAN!

LET'S GIT OUTTA TOWN WHILE WE **CAN!**

AIN'T A MAN LIVIN' CAN STOP GRIZZLY YOUNGER **NOW!**

KIRBY AYERS

V-102

WAKE UP, YOU TWO! MEET YOUR NEW PARD--THE RAWHIDE KID!

YUH--YUH **MEAN** IT, BOSS?

WELL, I'D RATHER HAVE 'IM **WITH** US THAN **AGIN'** US!

HEY, WHERE'S EVERYONE GOIN'? HOLD ON, YUH VARMINTS! DON'T NO ONE MOVE!

BAM!

EVERYONE BACK IN TOWN! PRONTO! YUH DON'T WANT THE RAWHIDE KID TO GIT ANGRY AND THINK YORE RUNNIN' **AWAY** FROM HIM, DO YUH?

HAW! LOOK AT 'EM ALL CRAWLIN' BACK! ALL I GOTTA DO IS MENTION YORE NAME TO HAVE FOLKS EATIN' OUTTA MUH HAND! WE'RE GONNA GIT ALONG REAL FINE KID! YEP--REAL FINE!

GRIZZLY, ONE THING I WAS WONDERIN' ABOUT...WHATEVER HAPPENED TO MARSHAL BEN CARSON?

THE MARSHAL? HEY! I'M RIGHT GLAD YUH **REMINDED** ME OF HIM!

THAT'S RIGHT--WE GOT A LITTLE UNFINISHED BUSINESS WITH THE MARSHAL!

13

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE...

'SWINGINGEST' WAY TO SAVE!

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All For Only $1.98 ppd.

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HE'S RIGHT HERE IN HIS OFFICE, WHERE WE LEFT 'IM!

THE KID! I-I NEVER THOUGHT YOU'D JOIN UP WITH THESE CUTTHROATS!

HOLD YORE TONGUE, MISTER! YOU AIN'T IN NO POSITION TO GO CALLIN' US NAMES! WE GOT THE WHIP HAND NOW!

DON'T DO THAT AGAIN, GRIZZLY! I DON'T RECKON IT TAKES ANY COURAGE TO HIT A MAN WHO CAN'T FIGHT BACK!

MEBBE IT DON'T, KID... BUT I GOT A JOB FOR YOU WHICH **IS** GONNA TAKE SOME COURAGE! IN ORDER TO **PROVE** YORE REALLY ONE OF US, I'M ORDERIN' YUH TO SHOOT THIS LAWMAN RIGHT NOW!

YUH WANT ME TO GUN 'IM DOWN WHILE HE'S **HELPLESS??**

IF'N YUH **DON'T** --WE'LL SEE TO IT THAT YUH **BOTH** GIT IT! RIGHT, PATCH?

COULDN'T BE RIGHTER, APE!

PART 4 "SHOWDOWN WITH GRIZZLY YOUNGER"

WHY SHOULDN'T I DO IT? YOU'D GUN **ME** DOWN IF YOU HAD THE CHANCE! I AIN'T NO MORE THAN A HUNTED ANIMAL TO THE LAW! WHY **SHOULDN'T** I SIDE WITH GRIZZLY YOUNGER AND WIPE OUT MUH ENEMIES ONE BY ONE!??

SHOOT, IF YORE GONNA, KID! I WON'T CRAWL! BUT WHEN I'M GONE, THERE'LL BE **ANOTHER** MARSHAL-- AND **ANOTHER** -- AND **ANOTHER!** NO OWLHOOT CAN SHOOT US ALL! SOONER OR LATER WE'LL **GIT** YUH, KID -- YOU, AND THE REST OF YOUR ROTTEN BREED!

YOU **HEERD** 'IM, KID! WHAT MORE DO YUH WANT?? GO ON, HOMBRE-- **SHOOT!**

THIS IS **IT**, MARSHAL!

SHOOT AND BE BLAMED, MISTER! I GOT SOMETHIN' **WORTH** DYIN' FOR!

CLICK!

I'LL **SHOOT** RIGHT ENOUGH, BUT NOT THE **MARSHAL!**

LOOK OUT, GRIZZLY!

I WUZ **EXPECTIN'** SOMETHIN' LIKE THAT, YUH COYOTE!

OWWW!

CUCUCU

DON'T WORRY, BOSS! **THIS** TIME WE'LL FINISH 'IM OFF FOR SURE!

BLOCK THE DOOR AND WINDOW-- DON'T LET 'IM GIT AWAY!

NO, YUH **WON'T**, HOMBRE! MEBBE THIS TIME I GOT SOMETHIN' TO FIGHT FOR, TOO!

QUICK, MARSHAL-- CUT YOUR ROPES WHILE I TACKLE GRIZZLY!

GOT IT, KID!

TOO BAD, KID, BUT I AIN'T AIMIN' TO GIVE YUH A CHANCE TO DRAW!

MUH SHOULDER!

BAM BAM BAM

GOTTA HANG ON--CAN'T BLACK OUT YET--GOT TO SEE THIS THRU--SOMEHOW!

THIS DESK! IF I CAN JUST GET ENOUGH LEVERAGE...

I **KNOW** YOU'RE BEHIND THERE, KID! THIS IS YORE FINISH!

WANNA **BET?**

WHAM!

AT LEAST I'LL GET RID OF **YOU**, LAWMAN!

DROP IT, GRIZZLY!

YUH FORGOT I CAN SHOOT WITH **EITHER** HAND!

POW!

WELL, MARSHAL-- I RECKON THAT--

DUCK, KID!

MEBBE **THIS'LL** EVEN US UP A MITE, KID!

UGH!

30 MINUTES LATER...

MARSHAL, I RECKON **YOU WIN!** I CAN'T FIGHT NO MORE WITH THIS SHOULDER, SO IT LOOKS LIKE YUH MADE A CLEAN SWEEP!

LONG AS I'M MARSHAL, IT'S MUH SWORN DUTY TO BRING YOU IN!

BUT I'M AN OLD MAN, SON, AND I RECKON IT'S TIME FOR ME TO **RETIRE!** NOW IF I AIN'T THE **LAW** NO LONGER, I CAN'T DO NO **ARRESTIN;** CAN I?

YUH MEAN--?

I MEAN THE WEST IS A BIG PLACE, KID...AND I RECKON SOME DAY YUH'LL FIND THE JUSTICE YORE **LOOKIN'** FOR! YORE NO MORE BADMAN THAN **I** AM! SO RIDE OFF, SON... IT'S GETTIN' LATE, AND THERE'S A LONG TRAIL AHEAD!

AND RIDE OFF THE RAWHIDE KID DID-- INTO ANOTHER TOWN AND ANOTHER BLAZING, GUN-SLINGIN' ADVENTURE --BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY, FOR ANOTHER DAY

The END

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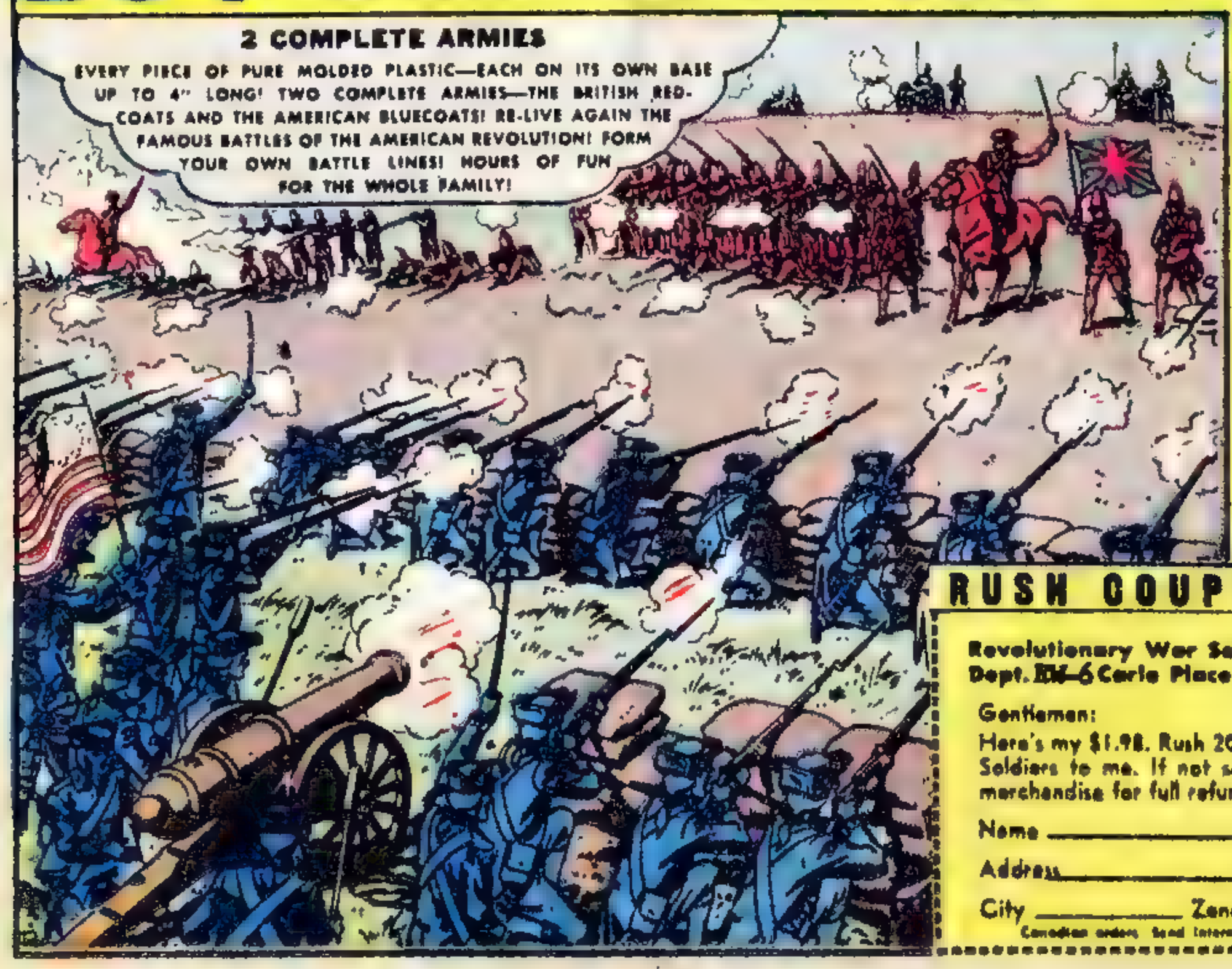
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he admitted. "Except that you're always claimin' to see ghosts . . . but nobody else does."

A look of triumph dawned on Brad Harvey's face and he smiled.

"Well, now somebody else has," he said. "You all heard Joe Bigart say he saw the same tracks I did. You all know there isn't a sheep within a hundred miles of here. And you heard Joe say those tracks were big . . . strange. If no natural sheep made 'em, then ghost sheep did."

The three other men leaned back in their chairs, considering. Brad Harvey certainly was a believer in ghosts, they knew. They also knew that lots of people believed in ghosts. But they felt that that didn't prove there really were ghosts.

"Well, I suppose it could seem natural to believe in ghosts, in a way," Len Wadsworth admitted. "But I just can't believe in sheep ghosts."

Harvey leaned forward, his eyes glittering with the new sense of triumph.

"Well, I'm goin' to write to one of those psychical-research societies. They got one in the state capital, and they'll send some competent people down here to look into this thing and prove there are ghosts tramping around and making marks." He shook his head vigorously.

"What was that you said, Brad?" Rufus Barton asked suddenly. He was holding a fresh horseshoe in his tongs and pulling energetically at the lever of the bellows. Once more the furnace flamed high. But this time, because of the atmosphere generated by the talk about ghosts, the light it cast seemed strange to the four men . . . and particularly to Brad Harvey.

"I said," Harvey continued emphatically, "that I'm going to call in a psychical-research society to look into this business, and prove to everybody there's ghosts of long dead sheep prowling these ranges again. And if sheep ghosts can come back, what about cattle ghosts, or those old ghost riders in the sky?"

Rufus let go the lever of the bellows and started hammering on the horseshoe. He put it into the furnace again, hammered it some more.

"Be right with you," he said quietly, and put the horseshoe for the third time into the flames.

Dreamily, the four men watched the quenching of the shoe, its adjustment and fastening by the small sledge-hammer. Finally, Rufus took off his big leather apron for a breather, downed a whole quart of water from an iron bucket and lit his pipe. He sat down for a moment with the four men.

"Brad," he said to Harvey, "you've been getting psychical-research societies to look into ghost reports for the last ten years. And what's the result? Nothing. Don't you think it's time you gave up spending money foolishly . . . and stopped believing in ghosts?"

Brad Harvey bridled a little, then he smiled wryly.

"Well, it's true I've proved nothing, but there's always the hope. And this time, with those unnatural sheep tracks . . ."

"Brad, if I *show* you what made those tracks, will you quit believing in sheep ghosts?" Rufus asked, and when Brad nodded, he reached over to a pile of metal strung on leather thongs, detached something and handed it to Harvey. "There's your ghost," he said. "I made four of 'em for the mayor's cayuse, and made one extra just to keep the pattern."

The men stared at the odd-looking horseshoe, in astonishment.

Rufus tapped it. "The mayor asked me to make something that would hold a horse's hoofs secure on frosty, slippery, sloping ground. That plug in the center is to hold the hoof on the ground. It's also what makes it look like the characteristic hole a sheep's hoof makes in the ground. And the framework of the horseshoe just makes it look like a giant sheep's mark."

Rufus hung the horseshoe back, and picked up the tongs again. He sent the fire blazing up.

Brad Harvey said, grinning, "I reckon the only ghosts I'll believe in from now on will be the ones I get to shake personally by the hand!"

THE END K-151

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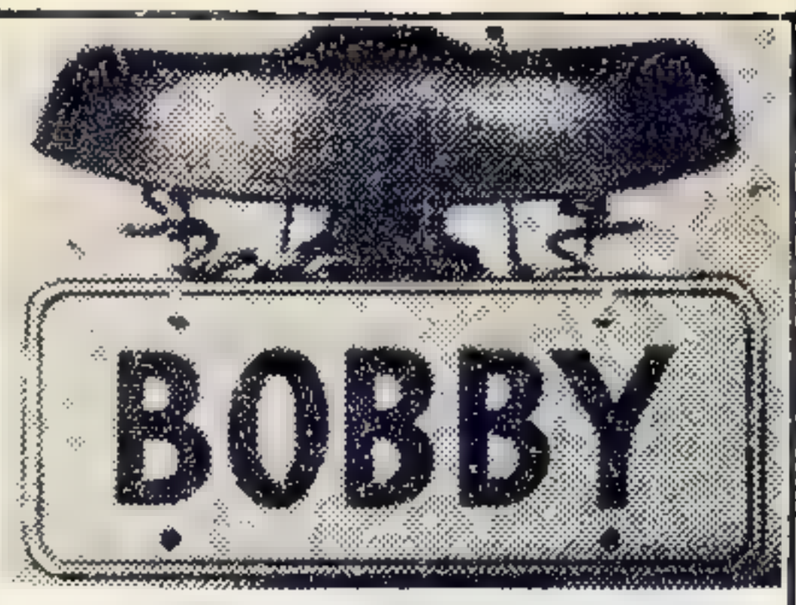

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THE GUNSLINGER!

Stan Lee

IT'S SETH BROWN! MOST LIKELY LOOKIN' FOR PROOF THAT WE BEEN RUSTLIN' HIS CATTLE!

THIS IS MY CHANCE TO GET RID OF HIM ONCE AND FOR ALL! NO COURT WILL CONVICT ME OF SHOOTIN' A TRESPASSER! I'LL--

NO, MR. GRIMES! IT--IT'S PLAIN MURDER!

V-103

NO ONE TALKS TO ME THAT WAY, SLIM! NOT EVEN MY FOREMAN!

CRACK

THERE! IT'S DONE!

NOW, DID I HEAR YUH OBJECTIN' TO ME PROTECTIN' MY PROPERTY FROM TRESPASSERS, MISTER?

N-NO, SIR-- I RECKON NOT!

THE FOLLOWING DAY...

RECKON YOU WERE WITHIN YORE RIGHTS, MR. GRIMES, BUT IT WAS A DANGEROUS THING TO DO! POOR SETH BROWN WILL MOST LIKELY BE IN THE HOSPITAL FOR A MONTH BEFORE THAT SHOULDER WILL BE HEALED!

THAT'S NO CONCERN OF MINE, SHERIFF! IF I DIDN'T BREAK ANY LAW, THEN YOU'VE NO BUSINESS WITH ME!

MEBBE SO, MR. GRIMES, BUT I RECKON YOU'LL BE HEARIN' FROM BAT BROWN ANY DAY NOW--SOON AS HE LEARNS WHAT'S HAPPENED!

BAT BROWN? WHO'S HE?

AIN'T YUH HEARD? HE'S SETH BROWN'S BROTHER! SUPPOSED TO BE THE MOST DANGEROUS GUN IN THE STATE! BUT YOU'LL BE SEEIN' HIM YORE-SELF SOON ENOUGH, AND THEN YOU CAN JUDGE!

SETH BROWN'S BROTHER--A GUNFIGHTER! A KILLER! I-I DIDN'T KNOW!

SHERIFF, WAIT! YUH GOTTA PROTECT ME! YOU CAN'T LET SOME STRANGER COME A'GUNNIN' FOR ME!

I'LL DO MY DUTY, GRIMES! IF HE SHOOTS YOU--I'LL ARREST HIM!

NO--YOU CAN'T LET HIM SHOOT ME! I WANT PROTECTION!

YOU EXPECT ME TO SLEEP OUTSIDE YORE DOOR ALL NIGHT? STOP CRAWLIN', HOMBRE! MAYBE YOU'LL BE LUCKY--MAYBE YOU'LL BE THE MAN TO OUTDRAW THE FASTEST GUN IN THE STATE! **ADIOS, MISTER GRIMES!**

SLIM, HERE'S FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS! BURN LEATHER TO ABILINE AND BRING BACK THE FASTEST GUNSLINGER YUH CAN FIND! SAVVY?

I'M ON MY WAY, MR. GRIMES!

BY THE TIME BAT BROWN CAN GET HERE, I'LL HAVE MY OWN GUNFIGHTER WAITIN' FOR HIM! AND MY OTHER BOYS WILL BE WAITIN', TOO! I AIN'T NOBODY'S FOOL!

MINUTES LATER...

FROM NOW ON, ONE OF YOU MEN STAYS WITH ME AT ALL TIMES! AND EVERY MAN WEARS HIS GUN LOW, UNTIL I SAY DIFFERENT!

SURE, MR. GRIMES!

WHATEVER YOU SAY, MR. GRIMES!

FINALLY...

HERE HE IS, MR. GRIMES! HE SAYS HIS NAME IS FLASH, AND HE AIN'T AFEARED OF NO MAN THAT BREATHES!

HOW FAST ARE YOU, FLASH?

EVER HEAR OF LIGHTNIN' LATHRUP, MISTER?

SURE! THE FASTEST GUN IN THE TERRITORY, TILL HE GOT BEAT LAST YEAR!

WELL, I'M THE HOMBRE WHO BEAT 'IM!

IS THAT FAST ENUFF FOR YUH, MR. GRIMES?

YOU BET! I WANT YOU AT MY SIDE ALL THE TIME-- UNTIL YOU GUN DOWN BAT BROWN! THE OTHER HANDS CAN TEND TO THEIR WORK NOW-- I WON'T BE NEEDIN' THEM!

LATER...

HOW COME A SMALL SPREAD LIKE THIS CAN AFFORD TO HIRE SO MANY HANDS? AND HOW CAN YOU AFFORD TO PAY SO MUCH?

HAW! THIS RANCH MAY BE SMALL, BUT I DON'T PAY NOTHIN' FOR MUH STOCK! THAT'S WHY SETH BROWN GOT SHOT! HE FOUND OUT I WAS RUSTLIN' HIS CATTLE!

YUH SOUND LIKE A MIGHTY SHARP OPERATOR, MISTER GRIMES!

YUH CAN SAY THAT AGAIN, FLASH! AND AFTER YUH ATTEND TO BAT BROWN IF YUH STICK WITH ME, I'LL MAKE YUH RICH! I CAN USE A FAST GUN ON MUH PAYROLL!

DON'T RECKON I'LL STAY AROUND THAT LONG, MR. GRIMES!

WHY NOT?

BECAUSE MY JOB HERE IS ALMOST DONE! YOU'D BEST DISMOUNT, MR. GRIMES!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? DO YOU SEE BAT BROWN? WHERE IS HE?

RIGHT HERE, HOMBRE! FLASH IS JUST A NAME I MADE UP WHEN YORE FOREMAN FOUND ME! MOSTLY I ANSWER TO THE NAME OF **BAT BROWN!**

YORE BAT BROWN?!

DON'T KILL ME--I'LL PAY YUH ANYTHING--BUT DON'T SHOOT ME--PLEASE--STAY BACK--DON'T COME ANY CLOSER --NO--

I GOT A JOB TO DO! I GOTTA DO IT!

LOOK OUT, YUH FOOL! YORE STEPPIN' TOO FAR BACK--DON'T--

NO--YORE TRYIN' TO TRICK ME! I WON'T LET YOU GET ME-- STAY BA--ACK--HELP!

WELL, MR. GRIMES --I RECKON THAT JUST EVENS THE SCORE A MITE!

5

TOO BAD ABOUT GRIMES, BUT HOMBRES LIKE HIM ALWAYS END UP THAT WAY SOONER OR LATER!

YORE RIGHT, SHERIFF, TOO BAD HE WAS SUCH A COWARD THAT HE JUST NATURALLY SCARED HISSELF TO DEATH--BEFORE HE COULD FIND OUT THAT I'M JUST ABOUT THE SLOWEST GUN IN THESE PARTS! WELL, I'LL BE GETTIN' BACK TO TEACHIN' SCHOOL NOW--MY JOB'S OVER HERE!

THE END

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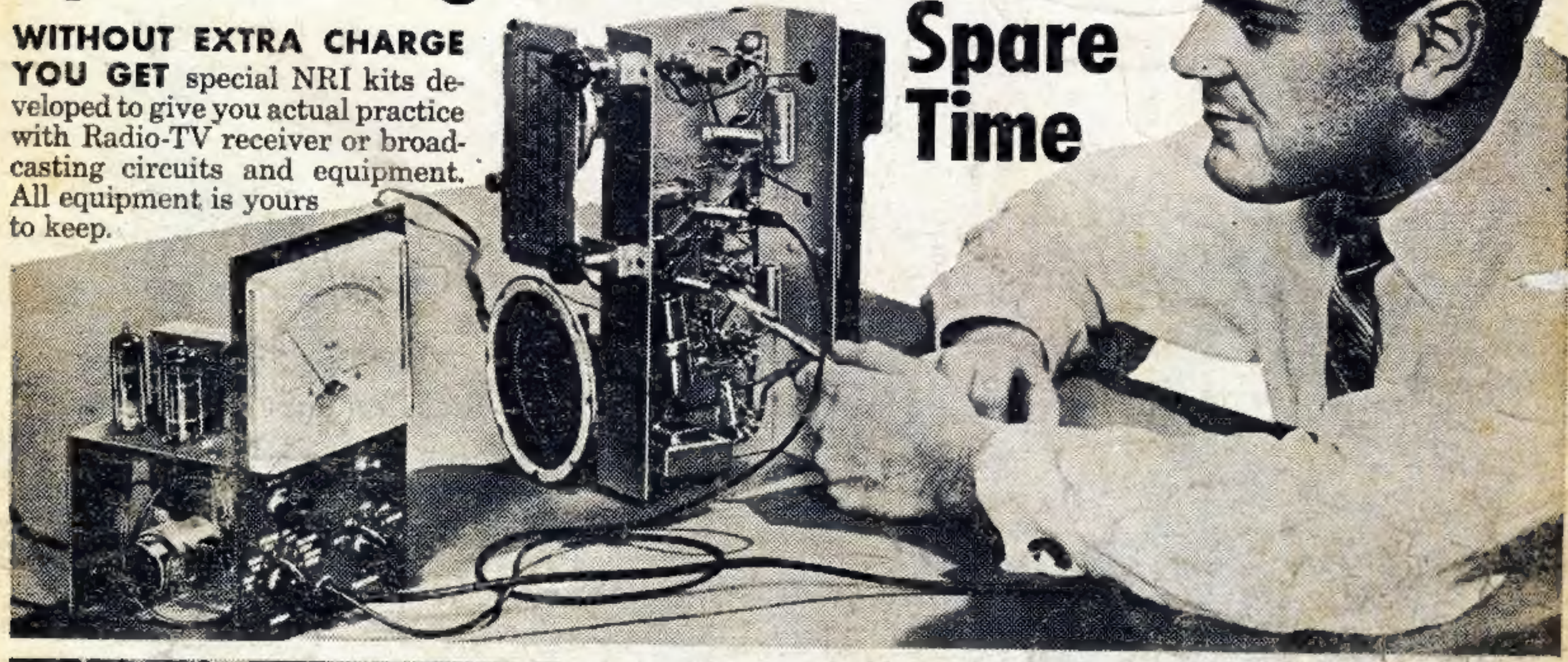

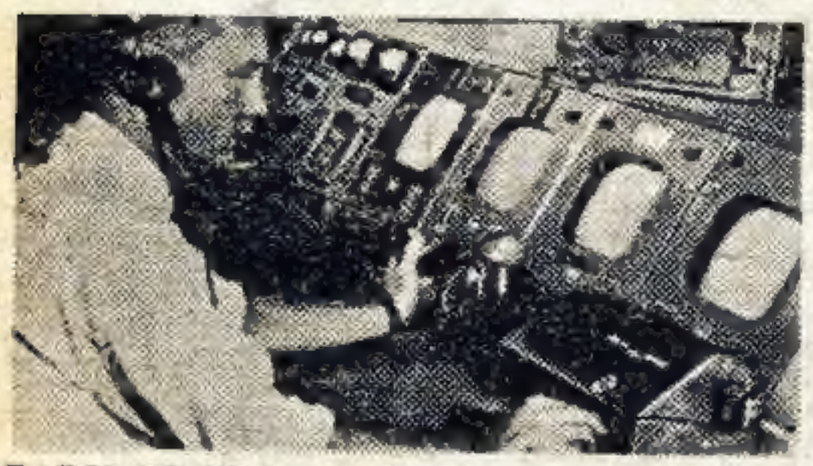

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